

THE
HAMMER

The title 'THE HAMMER' is centered over a large, multi-colored geometric polygon composed of numerous small triangles in shades of pink, yellow, blue, and red. The background features abstract white, light blue, and dark grey triangles.

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CPCC'S STUDENT ARTS & LITERATURE MAGAZINE





THE HAMMER

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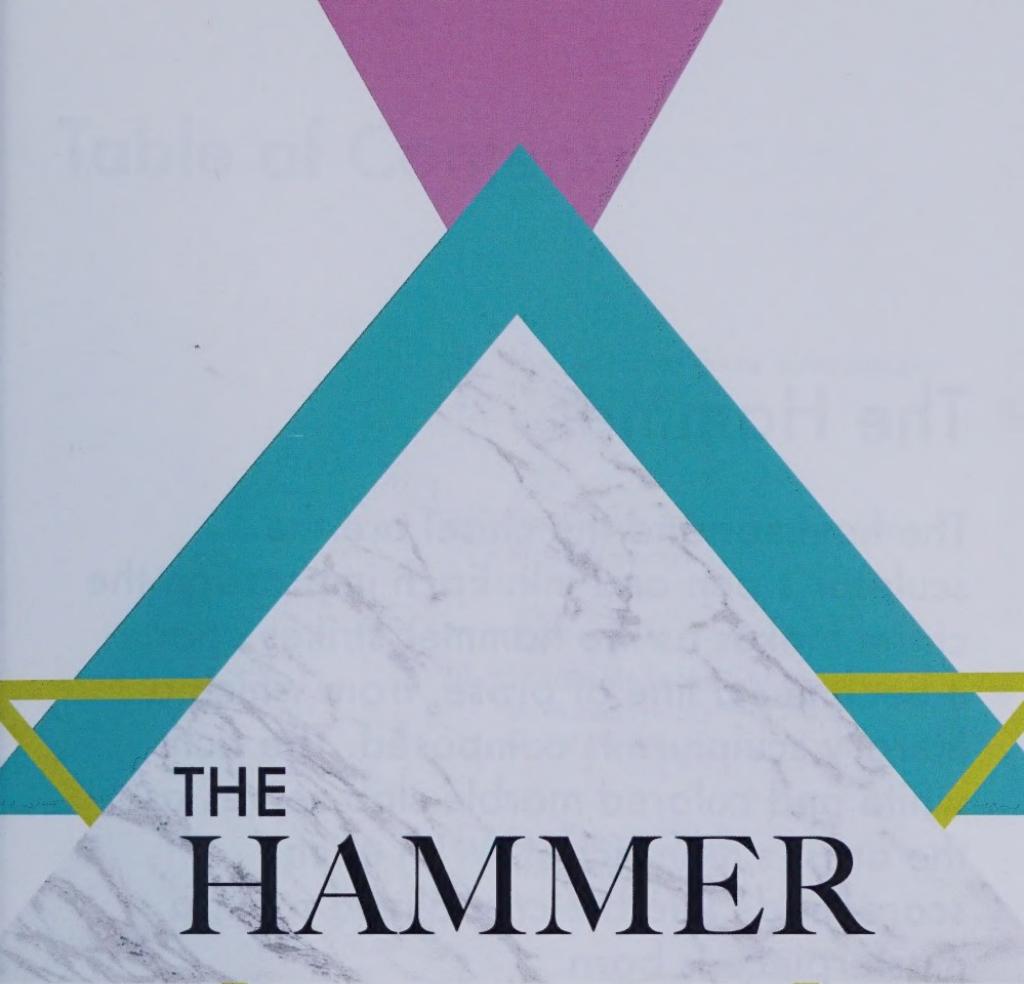
The Hammer is CPCC's student Arts & Literature magazine. Founded in 2017. The Hammer is based in Charlotte, North Carolina.

All visual, literary, and graphic arts herein were crafted, written, and designed by current students of Central Piedmont Community College.

Some literary works included are winners of the local level of a national literary competition sponsored by the League for Innovation in the Community College, and are marked as such.

Visual art taken from the Annual Juried Student exhibit, which showcases top talent among our students at CPCC, highlighting the variety and skill in our Visual Arts program. This year's honored juror is Kristin Rothrock, Lecturer in Foundations at UNC-Charlotte. Photographs by Chris Record.

Questions or comments? Please send a message to the editor at colin.hickey@cpcc.edu. Special thanks to Laura Bazan, the Sensoria Literary Events Board, Cassandra Richardson, Kenn Compton, and the Student Writers Assembled Guild.



THE HAMMER



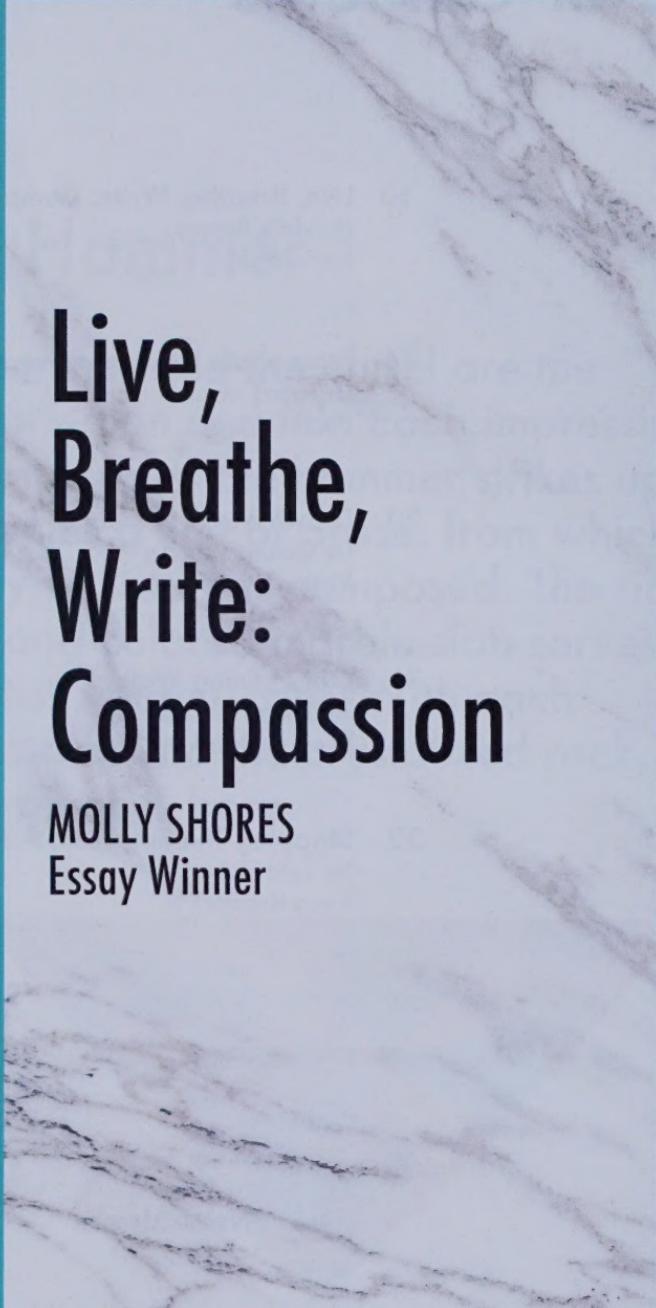
The Hammer

The hammer and the chisel are the sculptor's pen and ink. Each impression the chisel makes as the hammer strikes upon it becomes a line of prose, from which a literary sculpture is composed. The rich white and colored marble slab serves as the artist's manuscript. With each score made into the crystalized rock, a masterpiece is born.



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Live, Breathe, Write: Compassion

**MOLLY SHORES
Essay Winner**

Failure comes in waves; and at the crest, waiting to crash, is a chance at success. My own failures manifested in flunking out of high school and beauty school, writing dozens of terrible essays, and denying myself compassion. Compassion has two applications, inward and outward. People are most aware of outward compassion: wanting to help others. In a similar way, compassion can be turned inward and provide the same help and care to yourself that you might offer to a loved one. Knowing then what I know now, I could have applied a dab of compassion to myself and not only thrive in school, but produce incredible writing. My failures, as fate would have it, have guided me down an uplifting path: I live, breath, and write compassion.

We require a degree of compassion for others, to thrive. Something that often goes

un-taught, though, is that very same compassion being applied to ourselves. This compassion, or self-love, can be recognized with each conscious breath we take. Whether through meditation, conscious prayer, aerobic exercise, or that deep breath before bed; a conscious breath is a keen example of self-love, no matter where you are. I may have taken my first breath with a spank on the bottom in my first minutes of life, but I only truly learned to breathe in my mid-twenties. When I *learned* to breathe, I simultaneously learned self-compassion, because I cared about myself enough to breathe first, and act second. To preface each action with a self-aware breath allows for much-needed space in turning your life the direction you wish. To find success, for me, meant finding my breath.

Once I found my breath, as if lost to the floods of modern



Joseph Nettles
CUP SERIES II
Charcoal and conte on paper
25 3/4" x 17 3/4"



living, I had a chance to finally discover what was calling me through the monsoon. Since I was younger, I struggled with writing, but that struggle was now proof to me that it was something I loved. I've failed at writing numerous times; whether through lack of application or an inability to comprehend the task at hand. In some instances, my writing was just nonsensical, lacking any transition, and consisted of a childish stream-of-consciousness. Other times, my writing made perfect sense, but totally disregarded the prompt at hand. Through life, though, I've learned that those instances hold an unspoken truth: if I was willing to fail at all, then I am willing to succeed. I couldn't do that, though, without a modicum of self-compassion. I can remember in third grade I was struggling, and stumbling, in writing. I can remember it happening again in middle-school and high-

school. Without getting into the definition of what a failure is, perhaps it's best to outline what failure was teaching me, when seen through a lens of compassion: it wasn't that I was the embodiment of failure, but that I was hungry and deserving of success.

Success is perhaps one of the hardest things to achieve, considering that the only way to know if something is worth a damn is to fail at it a few dozen times. I've failed schooling approximately three times, and only now am I certain that it's the path for me. I've fallen short in writing hundreds of time, but the important thing is that I've risked failure hundreds of time because it was worth it to me. Life taught me that with a bit more compassion, I can take the risk failure at a chance of success, because I'm not longer afraid of failing or bent on success. The middle-ground between both failure

and success is my breath, and whatever comes before or after the culmination of my trials is also breath.

My compassion comes full-circle, when life-lessons meet breath, and provide clarity to do what I am driven to: write. No matter the aforementioned failures, and the struggle of success, I harness moments of calm and use writing as an outlet in two ways: I can express myself in fictitious or novel ways, and I can share with the world the importance of enjoying life. The ins and outs of breath, in every period and comma, throughout each illustrative paragraph, can all be expressed through the written word. Although the next phase is out of my hands, I hope that those reading my works learn about their breath and, in turn, use it as a compass to care for themselves.

The lens of compassion can be applied to many aspects of life, whether it be family, religion, nature, or writing. In turning that lens toward yourself, though, the empowering effects of compassion can ignite a love of life, and transform breath into solace. Through failure, compassion can find the silver lining. In strife, compassion can create a gentle place to breathe. In success, even, compassion compels you to extend parts of yourself to help others, no matter how. For me, compassion compels me to breathe, and what comes next is a wave text.

Ashley Martin
CALM REFLECTIONS
Digital photograph
19" x 23"



Fractionate Days of a Dreamer

JESSE GONZALES
Poem Winner

Face the fear and erase the hate,
And dance forever with the sun and moon
By the crystal clear lake.

Turn the page and raise the ill relations and condemnations
From my damned stirred wake,
And rejoice in the fires of passionate play.

Beautifully tacit was the change but what became strange was my love.
I remember the untouched days by the lake, where I saw night and day,
And grew my roots with whom I was thinking wildly of.
To be only apprentice to what is precious to the aspiring dreamer:
Desire.

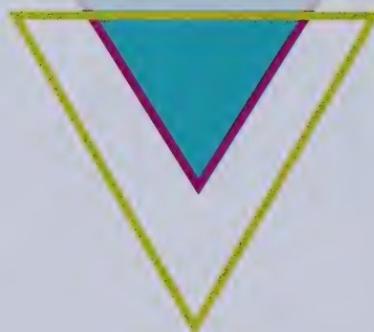
Place still my heart encased in slate,
And cast endeavor in my song to swoon
But as never to break.
Burn the cage and face the shrill temptations and realizations
Of this grand heartache.
And by choice leave the liars of machinate ways.
Unusually placid was the strange brush that paints the ranged skies above.
Last December I had touched base with the lake, when it was cold and grey,
And knew that you were in a place sinking idly love.
To be lonely and viscous to what is mystic to the retiring dreamer:
Silence.

Saintly embrace my life and fate,
And dance to render with the song to bloom
From the crystal clear lake.
Learn from age and praise the still creations and revelations
In this weird world's wake,
And rejoice in this life of fractionate days.
Undoubtedly avid and sustained is this blushing grain in the rough.
I remember the untouched place by the lake, where I felt night and day,
And blew my roots to where I will boldly solely love.
To be only apprentice to what is momentous to the acquiring dreamer:
Patience.



Drown me in a Field of Roses

VICTORIA WHEELER
Fiction Winner



In the shadows that await us, our very souls submit to the sidings between the lightness and darkness of our hearts. We fail... Fail to see the wonderful serenity of *balance* that could withhold such beauty. Balance... Nothing but the emptiness for a wording that cannot be expressed without the servitude of its counterparting triplets. Must we be like this? Choosing between the light of death and the darkness of life. Can we not be equal? Are we eternally bound and subjected to the enforcement of allegiance? What use does alignment have upon us? What have we erred upon so desperately that we are left within the ashes and speckling dusts of remain?

I. The shadow of a feminine figure emerges from the dimness of the forest. Her hair untouched by nature as her hand tightly grasps upon the branch of the tree she had rested earlier. Deep chestnut tiers inspect her home, stepping to gain a much broader perspective. Breathing shallow as her russet locks become strands of waves, framing her fragile visage. Paleness is her skin — embracing her tightly like children would as if they're home, and she their mother that they loved so dearly. Her footsteps continue to step onto the leaves — decaying and breathing—, beginning her daily venture into the forest she has been held captive within the depths of her blinding soul, her deafening mind, and erratic heart.

Silence she knew, and negativity she befriended. The once innocence now tainted with such calamity and distrust. It was almost as if the darkness consumed every part of her until it was its own... *her* own. And so does this fallen angel strides forth, cursing her very existence and how wonderful to be erased as life had no doing with such a waste. Those rosy petals are downwards into an unpretty sort of frown, displaying her

frustrations and rise of loathing. Hues shift upon the skin, peaking and wondering if life hadn't wanted her, would death make use of her? Would she be a reaper of some sorts? A demon? A person of witchcraft; betrayal; lust; sin? Who was she truly in this clouded obscurity? Was she all of what life wished not to have and crave, or was she the very concept people could not resist the temptation of with her seductive aura and deceitful intuition?

And to her leftness, she could hear sounds. Sounds of another soul here? Her eyes sharply glancing upon the direction, widening as she witness the adrift-ness of another feminine within this forest. But what was she doing here left darkness's angel in wonderment. Her movements sharp on the latter, brows knitting instantaneously into a deepened frown, because why... *why* was she here?

Between the hollowness of our blackened hands, do we understand the multitude of which life bestowed our very selves into? Death has gifted us the talent of sinning, cackling at its throne as we clash and fall into the dancing of madness. Life does not pity us so, instead labeling us as foolish, petty, or would-be's and could-be's. Have our hands been soaked into the blood of obscure liquid that we fail to see the whiteness—the purity of of it all? Are we so absorbed in this self-destructive nature of society that we cannot possibly save ourselves? Who are we to death? Are we the children of a forsaken destiny, in which we burn our bodies into fiery corpse in Hell? Do we mingle and spin and spin with the fancied falsehood that is Lucifer? Who are we to the darkness, dearest death? Who are we...?

II. Her heart does the beatings of *pit* and *pat*, vibrating throughout her figure until her lean fingers can feel its rising warmth. Roses are her cheeks, her mentality compelled to follow such light... such angelic spirit. Lightness are her steps as she follows the dismissive soul that continues to frantically glance around for sign upon sign to escape, unaware that she cannot.

The witness observes as the curiosity sparks, rising itself from the lungs and throat, threatening and yearning to escape into freedom. She wishes to communicate verbally to the vividness herself and know of her. She wishes to befriend—in hopes that even some blackness will be stripped from her. The other was beautiful; flawless; everything that she was not. And it almost frightens her to comprehend what these sentiments meant.

“No...” The shadowed angel felt her irises widening, knowing the language to be Latin though she does not speak it. Where did this angelic figure come from? Why was she here? Did something happen? If so, then what had? Does she have a home? Does she know what home is? The inquires causes the obscure female to wince, haze spotting her corners and the colors begin to become monochrome’s greyscale. She wants to curse, scream, bleed, and cry, because the radiance that is the spirit will be taken from her the diviness blocked from her ever-lasting obscurity. “I don’t like this! It’s not just!” She hollers, momentarily becoming ignorant to another in this entrapment that is neither hell or paradise.

*Drown me in a field of roses.
Make my heart light.*
*Hear my screams to the darkness.
Leave my body to sleep in the night.
Take what is part of my purity.
Make my heart fight.*
*Love to despise every part of all of me.
I'll be your awakening nightmares at dawn.
Carry me, little spirit of innocence.
Make my heart see truth.
Tell me the lies as deers to fawns.
Tell me it is all untrue.*

And therefore we have failed to understand that our hearts reach out for what we cannot see; what we cannot reach. We are too blinded by our affirmative hatred to understand the other alignment that could balance us right.

III. Her voice. Her very melody betrayed her, and now her echoing of seduction and downfall rings about the air. The fairness palm of her hand goes to conceal her lips, her expression being of horror as steps retracted. *Crunch. Crunch. Crunch. Crack.* The resonance of nature is filling the air, terror and hysteria beginning its attack against her delicacy. And her feet acted upon their own—as if they were another, scrambling and running to seek shelter so she may not be seen.

IV. The divine light could have been certain her hearing had not failed her utterly. Greek. Such a wonderfully ancient language like Latin itself, buried in the depths of classics and forgotten, forbidden in the sea of others. Her eyes cannot fail her. Not now

as she can barely see anything. Only the shadows of white and cosmic are her vision, incomplete and shielded from the much vastly deeper shades and saturations. Hazel brown optics glance about as she turns 'round the tree, senses heightened as she was determined to find whomever held that magnificent voicing of grace and authority. Interest is her soul, guiding her through the immense greenery to at least find whomever had outspoken themselves.

The cinnamon shading her hair brightens as her tiers shift to a light coloring of greyness. Her olive complexion is permanently tanned by now, becoming kissed by the sun's vivid lights and rays—heating her skin so she may not become numb. Hands brush upon branches on various lengths and eccentricities of tree, not minding if some thorned and pierced into her flesh, the whiteness of blood being seen dripping onto the ground. "Where are you..." She calls out into the unknown, pondering whether or not the blunting source could even hear her at this point. "Hello? Hello?"

And light shall seek its opposing counterpart as it means no harm. It is not as clever or cunning, yet it is bright and warming—willing to grace its presence onto the obscurity and overlook its sins of flaws with such uncondition of affection and bliss. Darkness, however, fears this type of treatment as it is unsure if the light means more harm than it did good. When you face one who is unlike yourself, is it safe to boldly go onwards? Or shall you coward backwards and fall forth into death's dangerous grip that life had once tried to grant you freedom from?



Nick DeMarsico
NEW FOUNDATION

Oil on canvas

48" x 36"

V. That melody of gloriousness and worshipfulness rung about the air, reaching the obscure female's ears. Something about the tone is odd; contrasting. Normally she cannot pick up on certain pitches of the sounds or the tone it is in, yet somehow her attention locks on the light-heartedness of that angelic spirit's voice. Time ticks for her; slowly... agonizing... *mocking* her for relishing the slowness by accelerating its pace and tampering with her heartstrings. All her vision is monochromatic hues, trapped within the vice-like grip that is reality within this fantastical forest. Abrupt reverberations tackles and battle their way into her hearing and she's stumbling backwards, thorns going into her flesh. Cosmic hues spill out as her blood, breath hitching and feet beginning to scurry. She had to depart from this... even if it meant *taking* her own self from this demeaning existence.

And all the while does the celestial spirit sense trouble, lips moving upon her own to pronounce words—yet mutely; without sound. She ventures onwards, straight locks gradually fading its way into the ethereal shadings of snow—accompanied by the rays of bubblegum, lavender, and Alice blue. Socked footsteps explore, investigating to find her counterpart. She wishes nothing more but to balance herself. To befriend. To love. To smile. To laugh. To *live*. To *die*. The heavenly being wished not to inflict damage of any kind, unawaringly and recklessly doing so without seeing who this other may be.

Her hues become aglow, the markings on her hand doing the same as she ducks under the curled tree trunk. Her sensory of the sixth heightened, propelling her to chase after her now. She cannot go. Not yet. And that is when the triggering of what is to occur flashes through her fragile mindset.



Not yet... Not yet! The otherworldly female is about to chase after the other; her opposing one, (*Crack!*) yet her physique betrays her. Any sign of magical abilities are erased and her appearance become normalized. Her sign traveled down her violet dress to eye the shattering of glass and liquid of grey (although it is actually scarlet), bleeding through the fabric and onto the grass. Dimness clouds her vision, the obscurity swift to take her very self into an eternity-like of slumber and her body disappears... only a pile of stardust left behind.

And it is when light sacrifices itself, darkness too is fated in this—both becoming one. A balanced spirit of neutrality. A new person; generation; one who may understand and utilize both in the variety of situations that they may be faced with. We'll become anew—blasting supernova, stardust, and formation of a star. We'll become handpicked with qualities, quantities, and destinies. It is up to us to learn this balance and use it wisely—else we'll fall into the misfortunate of choosing an alignment.

VI. Gasps and wheezes of air are all the obscured being can release. No words are able to form as noiselessness has consumed her very soul. Had she lost her counterpart in the midst of her escape? Her heart tells her yes, her mind screaming *victory!*, but her soul feels the detachment and void. Her soul became lifeless, yet all she could do is continue to run and stumble—aggressively shoving branches and leaves away. Memories haunt her—causing her sob and wish they would go away; leave her for life as she wished not to reminiscence anymore. It was too painful... too *miserable* for her to continue this cycle of suffocation.



"You are not alone." Her eyes are like saucers, yet there is no longer petrification brewing in her heart. It's... comfort, the knowing sentiment that one will always be there—spirit or person.

And as she turns, her foot fails to keep upright—swaying and her hand has roughly brushes against the thorn of a branch. There's nobody following and nothing chasing, creating the perfect opportunity to allow herself to wither away in such a way that would be considered suicide. Head slowly averting away, eyelids beginning to gradually fall close as her body deliberately slips into a lake. Full of cosmic radiation and colors as beautiful as the galaxies. Flowers of all kinds flow around her—the most being of roses, life having its escapade with the shadow-like female.

And as the story is told; billions and billions of years old. The starting of what they believed to be of Kosmos. The starting of what she had created and what she had done. The starting of everything after drowning in a sea full of roses, and two souls colliding together into the balance of one within the stars.

*Drown me in a field of roses,
One of white and gold.
Tell me of the silvers and blacks,
And the victories it hold.
Let my soul being taken in this sea of rose,
To allow the sun and moon raise me as their own.
This is how true to the story of my reign be told.*

Cheryl Hoke
The Last View
Silver gelatin
22" x 18"



*Selected Works
by Other Students*

Our Evening Walks

By Thelathia Singleton

Poem Runner Up

Blackness walks ahead of me with attitude
Such precision and purpose
Doesn't matter if she's
The leading lady or
She has my back
I look to her for comfort and
Reassurance that I am wonderfully made
Her confidence leaves me dumbfounded
I love her immensely
I take care of her
Though I am her brick house
And where her heart dwells
She walks with self-love
Where the tranquility of
My natural self
Can just be
She observes my willingness to need more
She walks with ambition
She is with me on bended knee
I am her Goddess
Her Nubian queen
Although it appears she may
Leave me in the most
Dreary of days
When clouds weep
And in the darkest hours
Because she knows I am strong she will return
When I least expect her and we will be one again

Stripping The Boy From A Man

By Tate Huber

Essay Runner Up

Life's climbs can be difficult with some being more arduous and treacherous than others. However, no matter the person, these events shape us. Our successes or failures allow us to gain the wisdom necessary to navigate through life. This is what defines a man. Sometimes we choose a path to prove something, and sometimes an experience chooses us. I chose to climb a mountain that would bestow me with a title that will shape me for a lifetime.

Five AM. The alarm clock signaled the start of my day and the start of a new life. Full of apprehension, I left the comfort of my bed to board a van headed to the airport. There were four of us, and talk was kept to a minimum as we were all nervous. When I boarded the plane destined for the Marine

Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, it was a surreal feeling. I had waited years for this very moment. When we finally took off, I looked out of the aircraft onto the ground below. In the bright afternoon sunlight, the ground, my home, my family, and my comfortable life fade into minuscule dots before the clouds shut them out. I was feeling such a rush of emotions: the image of my mother's tears still fresh in my mind and the tight handshake and approving nod of my recruiter filling me with pride.

The chaos that would be my life for three months started almost the minute I hit the ground. Distantly I heard a booming voice herding boys like cattle into a loose formation to board a bus. I was ready. This was what I wanted. I was to follow in the footsteps of many

brave Marines including my grandfather, Robert Leckey, Eugene Sledge. These were men who had chosen to climb the same mountain as I, and I aspired to join their ranks. The bus drove for what seemed like an eternity until it stopped in front of the receiving building which seemed vacant from the exterior. The Marine who came to get us off the bus came in like a bull. Rushing, pushing shaking, we ran from the bus to line up on painted yellow footprints. It was surreal.

Nervously, I shook myself back into life. I had prepared for this. It was time to start the climb.

The first 48 hours were a blur. I don't remember much other than watching my hair fall to the floor and packing the rest of my former boyish identity into a box. The first week was over as soon as it began, and now we were to meet our drill instructors for training day number one. Training day

one is affectionately known as "Black Friday." And black it was. Senior Drill Instructor Sgt. Florez was to be assisted by Drill Instructor Sgt. Haley, and Drill instructor Sgt. Davis. They would "train us to the best of their ability refusing to give up on us, even when we had given up on ourselves!" These three men were tasked with making boys into Marines and to be our guides through the three month ascent to the top of the mountain. Already we had begun to be stripped of our youthful tendencies and to replace them with the mentality of a man, whether we realized it or not.

Training began immediately with close order drill which was to be the keystone of our training. Eventually, we would learn the fundamentals of marksmanship for which the Marine Corps is revered around the Globe. Every aspect of recruit training was

designed to mold us into Marines who were to instantly obey orders. Each training event had a different lesson to teach, but one attribute was always required: discipline. If the exacting standards of the Drill Instructor's were not met, punishment would swiftly follow; routine bawling, and sleep deprivation became commonplace. The long days, short nights, and little to no time to eat made it hard to think of home or life before Recruit Training.

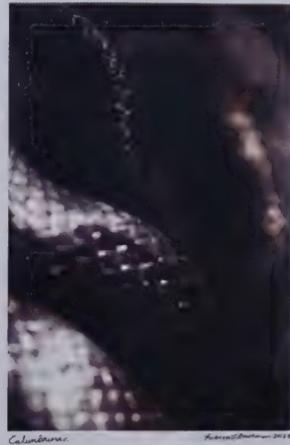
For many, this was the first time away from home for any extended period. Every day was difficult, a constant mental battle in which perfection and success were never achievable. The main objective of Recruit Training was to provide us with a moral compass that would guide us through the hurdles presented by military life. Recruit training culminated in one final event: the Crucible.

The training event was a fifty four hour exercise with little food and no measurable sleep. Marking the end of the exercise was a fifteen mile hike which contained an actual mountain along the route. In a cool dark fog, weary, hungry, and sore, we marched toward our ascent. As we reached the base of the mountain, it was too dark to see to the top, but feeling its presence was indescribable. The climb was punishing, but upon reaching the crest, we were awestruck by the most breathtaking view of the California coast at dawn. I was there. I climbed the first figurative and literal mountain life had to throw at me. I was then and forever will be a United States Marine

I would overcome many more obstacles in my military career, some much more difficult than the completion of basic training. While the boy that watched his home fade away through a small

aircraft window was still there, I had become a man whether I liked it or not. I will never forget the events that shaped my boyish ideals into those of a man. The Marine Corps would grant me amazing opportunities and friends. However, the cruel hand of war, a life too difficult to bear, and unexpected tragedies would take some of those friends. As I left the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, I looked out the side of the aircraft with mixed emotions, but this time, I wasn't a boy leaving home, I was a man, a Marine, and a proud American ready for whatever the Corps asked of me.

Rebecca Buchanan
Columbrinae (Rat Snake)
Digital photograph
24.25 " x 18.25 "



A Hero's Brother

By Jacob Page

Fiction Runner Up

Day 1.

Brother has just left Tosun. The men say they are going to the Northern Battle Camp. I don't know when we will see him next. I wish him the best, but I can't deny my envy. I mean, we found Scrios together. The Order of the Mane should've taken us both. They wouldn't have even taken him if the gauntlet hadn't melded to his arm as soon as he put it on. And now he gets to go on an adventure, while I get to stay here, in Tosun, and look after Mother. I am happy for him, but I wish we could save everyone, together.

Day 2.

First day without Anwyl. It was strange not being able to say "Good Morning" to my own twin brother. By now, we would already have finished our

chores and escaped to the forest to fight grass stalkers. Now that he is gone, chores take twice as long. I wonder if he has encountered a greater beast yet. I remember when we were kids and he almost woke up a stone eater. He's lucky I was there. He might have left with more than a broken arm. I can't let him get better than me. Just because he is "The Destined Champion" doesn't mean I have to fall behind. I'm going to finish chores faster than he ever could, and he's going to come home and never again see a grass stalker, or any other lesser beast near this town again.

Day 8.

The messengers stopped by, Today. Anwyl has begun training under the Order. They say he is a natural at fighting lesser beasts. It's funny to think he used to say fighting in the woods would never prove useful later in life. It's a shame



the messengers can't take word from home to him. I would give my last silver to be there, just to gloat in his face. I wish you well, Brother. I cannot wait to hear about when you take on your first greater beast.

Day 12.

I get to go to town tomorrow morning. Visiting the town never really thrills me. The forest is so much more interesting. Still, it is nice to get some earnings for the crops and milk I worked for by myself. Not to mention, Lavena lives on the way to town. Her father is the town physician, so she should be outside tending to the medicine garden or reading as I pass by. It's hard to have a bad day when I get to see her. I always smile and wave. She smiles and waves back. I do wish I could figure out what to say to her. What do you say to a lady with hair like the wheat fields at sunset and eyes like a maelstrom? Anwyl was always

better at talking to women. I wish he was here to help me with this adventure...

Day 13.

It was bizarre going into town today. For some reason, everyone wanted to talk to me and ask about brother.

"When will he vanquish the tyrant?"

"How many beasts has he slain thus far?"

It was like I had become a celebrity by association. They had even paid a little extra for the crops I had brought. I don't believe I had ever seen so many smiling faces. Still, the best smile of the day was from Lavena.

Day 24.

According to the messengers, The Titan King sent his forces to the camp for Serios. Anwyl was able to escape with some Order members to the Frozen Shores, as I expected. They



tried to explain to me what this war was like, but it just sounded like an overly complicated game of chess. After all, the only thing that can destroy the master of Beasts, greater and lesser, is currently fastened to Anwyl's arm. I can't see why they don't just walk to the Titan King's door and take care of it. I mean, really, how hard can it be?

Day 44.

Today was amazing. For the first time in weeks, I had caught up on all of my chores. I got to spend the whole day by the outer forest fighting grass stalkers. Not to mention, I finally beat my brother's record. Let's see if he can top thirty when he gets back.

Day 71.

Received word that Anwyl assisted in fighting his first greater beast with the Order. Apparently, Ice Swimmers can freeze anything, even fire. That

power would have been useful two summers ago when we dropped the lantern in the barn. Congratulations on your first real fight, my brother.

Day 104.

Made another trip to town, Today. It was the same as the past few, with the same overabundance of smiles and praise. I noticed that no one was calling me by my name anymore. Everyone kept referring to me as "Anwyl's Brother" or "The Champion's Brethren." Still, I can't say it was a bad day, for obvious reasons.

Day 114.

Happy Birthday, Anwyl. I hope you're well.

Day 158.

Mother has developed a cough, as of late. I do not think it is too serious, but I am going to take her to the physician tomorrow to see what he thinks. Besides,



how can I pass up a chance to see Lavena? And if mother needs medicine for her cough, then it will be a good thing that we went. I just have to not be awkward tomorrow. Alright, Burgess. Don't be awkward. Don't be awkward.

Day 159.

I have never had a more awkward experience in my entire life...

Day 162.

Since the physician gave Mother that cough medicine, she has been doing much better. I am glad her health has improved, but I do wish I had another reason to go back to the doctor. Who knows. I may develop a cough in the next few days.

Day 210.

Mother's cough came back. I am a little worried for her. I will be taking her back to the doctor tomorrow.

Day 212.

The physician gave her some more medicine and said that she should lighten her workload. It took everything to convince her to let me do the chores. She can be quite stubborn when it comes to things like this. The doctor also said I would need to come back regularly to restock Mother's medicine.

Day 251.

Mother has been feeling better, lately. I still don't want her doing anything strenuous, though. It is unfortunate I haven't been able to go back to the forest in some time, but if it is to help Mother, it is worth it. Whenever Anwyl returns, he can help us, too. Then days would be more like they used to be.



Day 289.

Brother sent a book. It contained everything anyone need know about slaying a greater beast. He had marked the page about stone eaters, and left a note:

"How about you avenge me for that broken arm long ago, Ha! I miss you, brother. I hope you and Mother are well."

If only I could tell him that my beast slaying days were near behind me. Still, the book was a good read.

Day 337.

I have to leave tomorrow morning to get some more medicine for Mother. I wish she would get better. With Anwyl gone and her unwell, the work for the fields has been hard enough. If she could get better, though, at least I could sleep soundly at night. Instead I just end up worrying.

Day 338.

The physician took longer to prepare the medicine than normal. I had to wait outside the prep room with Lavena. The silence was unbelievably uncomfortable, but it was still nice to see her. I didn't expect to be upset when the silence broke.

"So, have you heard any word about your brother?"

I think I preferred the smile and wave.

Day 367.

The messengers say that Anwyl may slay the Titan King within the next month. I'm hopeful what they say is true. I am sure he has had a wonderful adventure, but I could really use his help right now. It isn't easy doing everything by myself. Please come home soon, Brother...



Day 396.

Went into town, again. After our “talk,” I decided to avoid passing the doctor’s house today. Apparently, the entire town chipped in to erect a statue of Anwyl in the center of town. It stood tall with a bronze plate at his feet.

Anwyl: The Man Destined to Save Us All

The townsfolk said that I should be a proud brother. At this point, I don’t know if I want him to come home or stay on his adventure forever.

Day 397.

So much for “within the next month.”

Day 429.

Mother collapsed this afternoon. I was able to get her into her bed but she didn’t look very good. I fetched the doctor as soon as I could. He came up to check on her. He told me that the medicine is lessening

her symptoms, but her overall condition has been worsening. At this moment, he is unsure of how long she has left. All I can do is help make her comfortable. Please be okay, Mother...

Day 451.

Mother has become bedridden. The medicine is helping ease her pain but I wouldn’t call it ideal. The only things that comfort her are the reports on Anwyl. I’ve only seen her smile when she reads those letters. I’ve made a habit of throwing them in the fire after she finishes with them. I don’t see a point in hearing what he’s been up to. He hardly feels like a brother to me anymore.

Day 494.

I hate you, Anwyl!! I NEVER want to see you again!!! You are NOT my brother. My brother would’ve been here! He would’ve helped! He wouldn’t have left me all alone!!



Day 523.

I hate you...

Day 563.

I hate you...

Day 594.

Anwyl is the greatest? Anwyl is the destined hero? Anwyl will save us all? We will see about that! It's time to rid that forest of it's infestation.

Day 595.

Managed to kill eighty grass stalkers so far. At this rate, the forest will be cleared.

Day 596.

Successfully cleared the forest of any and all grass stalkers. The night ended with what sounded like an earthquake. I hope my suspicions are wrong.

Jennifer Clifton
Live Oak Canopy
Oil on canvas
26 .25 " x 20.25 "



Day 597.

A messenger found me and informed me that the Titan King, as a last attempt to stop Anwyl, has sent a stone eater to attack Tosun. I had to do something. By the time I made it to town, the beast had already begun rampaging. There were bites out of stone columns, craters in the ground, the crumbled remnants of a statue. The beast was heading to the edge of town, towards the physician's house. I don't know if it was bravery or stupidity that drove me towards the monster, but after reading about stone eaters in Anwyl's book, I felt like I knew what to do. The next thing I remember, Lavena had brought me into her house. Apparently, the stone eater had near gotten to her house before I got there. She didn't know how, but I had managed to slay the beast. The stone eater, however, left my body seriously wounded. I don't know why, but Lavena appears very upset with me.

Day 598.

Lavena asked if I remembered when we were kids and I brought Anwyl to her dad to mend his arm. She said she thought I had been so brave that day. Her favorite days from then on were the ones where I would pass by on my way to town and smile at her. When the Order of the Mane came and took my brother away. She was so thankful that it wasn't me going. She couldn't stand the idea of me being hurt. I couldn't help but cry, and apologize for my behavior and for getting hurt so badly. She accepted my apology with a kiss.

Day 610.

Most of my wounds had healed, thanks to Lavena. I can tell she has learned a lot from her father. It feels nice to be cared for.



Day 620.

Lavena took me into town. The entire town was there to see me. Everyone was thanking me and shaking my hand. Many embraced me and began to cry. They brought me to the town square where they had a large structure underneath a cloth. They asked me to unveil it. As I pulled down the cloth and there was a new statue, one of two brothers. There was even a new bronze plate.

Burgess and Anwyl: Two Brothers Who Saved Us All

I couldn't help but come to tears.

Day 644.

Welcome Home, Brother.

KC Roberge

Untitled

Clay

14.5 " x 7 .5" x 7 .5"



A Marathon

By Samuel Clarke

Poem Honorable Mention

The training is the hardest part.
The distances between yourself and other people
Grow longer and longer
And you still recover from the last run.
The scars, pulled muscles, and bruises are still tender,
Making training difficult.
But you must

Train.

Because the next run could be anytime,
The start pistol tearing through your life without notice,
And so you heal, sweat, build yourself up,

Train.

Tears fall and splash,
Leaving your pain in puddles behind you as you

Train.

You become numb from the exercises, yet still you

Train.

Train for the next marathon of emotions,
The next run of

Pain.

CENTRAL PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE



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